CHALLENGE

FIGHT FOR COMMUNISM · LUCHA POR EL COMUNISMO · PLP

THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER OF PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

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COMMUNIST REVOLUTION WILL BURN DOWN THIS GENOCIDAL SYSTEM



Seen page 6 for communist chants in for workers in Palestine

Workers rallying in front of Newark, NJ's City Hall, demanding a ceasefire.
Genocide and war is the nature of capitalism and imperialism. Fight for communism.

Newark, NJ, February 22—More than 100 Newark students and workers rallied outside of City Hall to demand the city council pass a resolution calling for an immediate, permanent ceasefire and an end to the genocidal U.S./Israeli war against workers in Palestine. We started our action off strong with a comrade leading chants of **"Biden, Biden, you can't hide, we charge you with genocide" and "War on Gaza, Capitalism means we got to fight back!" "Occupation has got to go! This whole damn system's got to go!**

As inter-imperialist rivalries are becoming more dangerously volatile and bringing us closer to World War III, liberal politicians worldwide are desperately trying to turn this militant rebellion against imperialism and genocide into deadly support for national bosses in upcoming elections. A young woman who came to the Newark rally after a month-long fight for a ceasefire resolution passed in Union City, NJ, stated, "...the ceasefire resolution has indeed pacified folks." Meanwhile, connecting Gaza to the struggles and fightback in the streets, where workers work, go to school, and receive services, creates an opportunity for us to build a mass communist Progressive Labor Party (PLP) that has a fighting chance at rivaling imperialism. Mass fightback allows workers to build each other's confidence that we can organize a society where we do for each other without getting paid wages. That's communism! Bosses prefer we sit in meetings with their politicians for hours and be given false hope for laws and resolutions their bosses will never respect. They don't want us to learn that most impor

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JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL FIGHT FOR COMMUNIST REVOLUTION





OUR FIGHT

Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to destroy capitalism and the dictatorship of the capitalist class. We organize workers, soldiers and youth into a revolutionary movement for communism.

The dictatorship of the working class — communism—can provide a lasting solution to the disaster that is today's world for billions of people. This cannot be done through electoral politics, but requires a revolutionary movement and a mass Red Army led by PLP.

Worldwide capitalism, in its relentless drive for profit, inevitably leads to war, fascism, poverty, disease, starvation and environmental destruction. The capitalist class, through its state power — governments, armies, police, schools and culture — maintains a dictatorship over the world's workers. The capitalist dictatorship supports, and is supported by, the anti-working-class ideologies of racism, sexism, nationalism, individualism and religion.

While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions worldwide. Capitalism returned to Russia and China because socialism retained many aspects of the profit system, like wages and privileges. Russia and China did not establish communism.

Communism means working collectively to build a worker-run society. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. While capitalism needs unemployment, communism needs everyone to contribute and share in society's benefits and burdens.

Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of "race." Capitalism uses racism to super-exploit Black, Latin, Asian and indigenous workers, and to divide the entire working class.

Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women— sexism—and divisive gender roles created by the class society.

Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.

Communism means that the minds of millions of workers must become free from religion's false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the masses of workers can use the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.

Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

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WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?

CHALLENGE is for the working class, produced by the working class. The fact that CHALLENGE/PLP articles are not signed grows from PLP's criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a "following" around any particular individual.

While an article may be written by one person, the final version is based on collective discussion and criticism. Many times this collective discussion even precedes an individual's writing of an article.

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Editorial

Pakistan: ripped apart by rivalry & crisis

Following the February 8 general election in Pakistan, thousands of workers across the country have shut down highways, picketed government buildings, and united in workplace strikes. The country's capitalist bosses have responded by unleashing riot police with tear gas to beat protestors and conduct mass arrests.

Millions of workers and youth are enraged with the election's outcome, which saw jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan and his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Party candidates sidelined amid widespread allegations of fraud and vote rigging (Guardian, 2/17). The wrath of these workers is rooted in profound economic misery that has only intensified in recent years. Workers are caught in the crossfire between an increasingly divided Pakistani ruling class and the vice-like grip of competing U.S. and Chinese imperialists. The international communist Progressive Labor Party calls on the working class of Pakistan and around the world to reject the bosses' schemes to make us choose sides between competing factions of racist, nationalist exploiters. Our only way forward—our only way out of crushing poverty and genocidal imperialist wars—is to build the revolutionary struggle for a borderless and egalitarian communist society, under the leadership of a mass PLP.

Workers in Pakistan bled dry by inter-imperialist rivalry

Strategically situated in South Asia, with a population of over 200 million and armed with nuclear weapons, Pakistan has long been a focus of interest for rival imperialist blocs. In 2001, after the attacks of 9/11, as U.S.-NATO forces invaded neighboring Afghanistan, the U.S. bosses pressured Pakistan's rulers into a military alliance against the Taliban. The consequences of the ensuing twenty-year occupation were staggering: more than 70,000 lives lost, $150 billion in debt, and a deadly surge in clashing insurgent groups (Time, 5/29/22).

The crushing debt made the Pakistani bosses even more reliant on loans to stay afloat, a crisis that the predatory U.S.-led International Monetary Fund (IMF) was happy to exploit. To qualify for the latest IMF bailout, Pakistan's ruling class turned the screws even tighter against workers by raising fuel and electricity prices, triggering widespread protests in major cities (Reuters, 1/11).

Over the past decade, meanwhile, the Chinese imperialists have positioned themselves as an alternative source of loans to Pakistan, investing tens of billions of dollars. In the process, China has incorporated Pakistan into their transcontinental infrastructure project, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Under the guise of "development," the Chinese bosses gained critical access to Gwadar Port and the Indian Ocean beyond, skirting other transit routes patrolled by the U.S. (Wilson Center, 10/20/20).

In reality, the flood of Chinese investment across Pakistan has created even more exploitation and poverty. In the resource-rich province of Balochistan, workers have protested against Chinese fishing boats that dominate local waterways and increase local unemployment (The Diplomat, 5/29/22). What's more, as the troubled Chinese economy contracts, more infrastructure projects across Pakistan are stalling. With China less willing to forgive their billions in loans, Pakistan's economy is in freefall (South Asian Voices, 3/22/23). Workers across the country are certain to bear the brunt of this imperialist disaster.

Local bosses crank up fascist discipline

Much of the chaos now rocking Pakistan is driven by a split within the Pakistani ruling class on whether to side with U.S. imperialism or rival Chinese or Russian imperialists. In a country where the military has long dominated the economy for its own profit, this instability is nothing new. Since Pakistan's formation in 1947, no prime minister has completed a full five-year term (Al Jazeera, 2/12).

In April 2022, after populist misleader Imran Khan took a neutral stance on the Russian imperialists' invasion of Ukraine, he was attacked with a no-confidence vote in parliament and ousted from office. Leaked cables later showed that U.S. diplomats had threatened economic and political consequences if Khan remained in power. Once he was out of the picture, weapons sales ticked up from Pakistan to the U.S.-backed Ukrainian military (The Intercept, 8/9/23).

The latest election fiasco reflects a period of rising fascism in Pakistan. The old guard bosses, represented by pro-U.S. political parties, are openly disciplining Khan and his China-leaning capitalist backers. Although the PTI won the most seats in the election, the rival Pakistan Muslim League and Pakistan People's Party have joined to form a majority coalition government and guarantee that pro-U.S. forces will hold the reins—at least for now (BBC, 2/20).

The allegations of corruption and collusion aside, workers everywhere must see that Khan—or any other capitalist politician—is no answer for the needs of our class. Despite throwing a few crumbs out to workers, Khan did nothing to stem the country's skyrocketing inflation and unemployment, nor did he challenge the imperialists and their rapacious financial institutions (Stratheia, 8/23/23). Rather than mobilize behind our oppressors, workers must redirect our anger at the capitalist system itself and unite as a class to overthrow it.

Glimmers of fightback point to communist future

Workers across Pakistan have demonstrated a strong fightback culture that can inspire our class and our communist future. In the summer of 2022, unprecedented flooding devastated the country. As thousands were killed and more than thirty million displaced, workers took rescue actions into their own hands and saved many lives. Despite limited resources, comrades from PLP helped lead some of these efforts to set up medical camps and distribute food and tents while pointing out the failure of the capitalist bosses and their system (see CHALLENGE, 9/21/22).

In October, 2023, when the racist bosses enacted a ruthless policy to expel over one million refugees from Afghanistan back to that country and to militarize the border, workers of different ethnic backgrounds came together to organize a months-long sit-in to pressure the government to back down (Times of India, 12/25/23).

These courageous actions are only a glimmer of the potential of what the working class can achieve when we unite and organize in our common interest. In a volatile world on a crash course to the next world war, our future survival hinges on our ability to weave these threads of fightback into a mass international movement for communism. Workers of the world, unite! Join PLP!

Transit bosses can't put brakes on transit workers' fightback!



Transit workers from Amalgamated Transit Union Local 689 on the picket line, demanding a better contract. Strikes are schools for communism, because they help workers' see theiir revolutionary potential

Fairfax County, Virginia, February 26 - Today striking Fairfax County transit workers from Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU Local 689) rallied to demand a better contract from Transdev, a predatory private contractor. Transdev wins transportation contracts from Washington, D.C. area county governments by low-ball bidding at the expense of its workers. But Fairfax Connector workers, mostly Black and immigrant, have solidly shut down Transdev (647 out of 650 workers have hit the bricks). They have been without a contract since November, and are fed up with Transdev's slow-walking of negotiations and their pitiful contributions to their 401(k) retirement fund. Progressive Labor Party (PLP) members, including members from Local 689, provided regional solidarity at the rally while sharing revolutionary communist analysis of the need to overthrow capitalism. The bosses have tried to weaken the workers by splitting up the regional workforce into smaller companies, but workers are fighting more intensely than ever.

Transit workers rail against bosses' attacks

Recent transit strikes in Loudoun County, at Metro Access, and DC Circulator, coupled with threats of strikes at Driving Alexandria Safely Home (DASH) transit in Alexandria, VA have put the bosses on notice that ATU Local 689 workers will not back down. They are fighting for parity with the wages and benefits of the 9,000 workers for the much larger Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA).

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Newark: workers rage vs genocide & liberal fascist pols



An antiracist fighter holds up sign in front of Newark's City Hall. Communism means building workers' power to smash imperialist genocide, and creating a new world in which the working class, from Gaza to Newark, can survive and thrive.

tant lesson: that the working class can run the world!

Join the international Progressive Labor Party. Stand side by side with the rest of the international working class in turning the fight against this genocidal system into a class war against capitalist bosses!

No good politicians in a racist system!

PLP members exposed to students and workers that bosses, whether liberal or gutter racist, will always betray workers. Newark Mayor Ras Baraka's bestie and leader of the reform arm of the city, Larry Hamm, used the rally to get signatures for his Senatorial campaign. Then he told the workers gathered that he had to go to another event in Princeton so we were on our own in facing police blocking the doors of the City Hall chambers. But make sure we vote in November! Another mouthpiece for the Democratic Socialists urged the crowd to use ballots to fight back. One comrade cut him short and chanted, "NO GOOD POLITICIAN IN A RACIST SYSTEM." One student holding up CHALLENGE as a protest poster chanted with us.

We learned this the hard way with the George Floyd movement. All the antiracist and multiracial rebellion at the fascist, racist police terror was co-opted by the Democrats into voting and pushing for what seemed like a militant call to defund the police. As we marched to enter the council chambers, a line of workers were barred from going inside. We chanted, "Let us in! Let the people in!" The cops refused until a comrade explained to the crowd, "This is how capitalism works–even in one of the biggest cities in New Jersey with a Black 'progressive' mayor, we are blocked from entering public meetings."

More of the crowd cheered then chanted with us, "NO GOOD POLITICIAN IN A RACIST SYSTEM!" Another PLP member explained this is a symptom of rising fascism and that liberal bosses are often the most fascist of them all. The more militant we became in giving speeches exposing how liberal democracy is leaving workers' demands out in the cold, the more outraged workers encouraged communists to take the blowhorn. With our militant push, cops and their bosses then let everyone inside.

From Gaza to Newark: Imperialist profit and greed destroy workers' lives

Rutgers University students drafted a ceasefire resolution weeks before and in return, Newark Councilwoman Louise Scott-Roundtree put forward the most watered-down, worthless resolution–not even mentioning Palestine or Gaza at all but calling for "world peace!" As if capitalism will ever deliver world peace!

We were all outraged at Roundtree's duplicity, and our rage burned hotter as we listened to our fellow Newarkers blast the Council for selling workers out to racist developers, L+M. The Council handed the slum lords another 30-year tax abatement like candy canes at Christmas. At the same time, these same racist developers run apartment complexes like Georgia King Village and St. Mary into the ground, with no heat, rats, roaches, broken elevators, and harassment of the tenants by Black-led management. A comrade got up and called out the Council for selling the city off to developers: "From Newark to Gaza, we need housing, we need safe streets; from Newark to Gaza, we need schools for our kids. Stop gaslighting us for caring about our and other workers' kids!"

No voting away a genocide

After passing all the resolutions granting concessions and tax abatements for their favorite developers, the Council passed their do-nothing-say-nothing resolution. We emboldened the courageous leadership of a student by interrupting the meeting. We shouted the politicians down, saying, "You support genocide!" Another student with us yelled, "If you'd stop bombing babies, we'd have money to save babies here!" As usual, the cops were sent in to "escort" us out.

The best thing about these current rebellions against genocide is that they are schools for communism. Communism is the only way to end the imperialist wars that threaten to engulf the planet. Then we will not only stop genocidal wars forever, but we will build a world worth living in! Join PLP!

KKKops are haram

Beat back racist violence on campus



Pictured here is the halal cart near the KCC front gate vandalized by racists who tagged it with antimuslim grafitti that reads kill all Palestinians. When workers are under racist attack we cannot count on racist kkkops to protect us. We protect and keep each other safe.

Fighting for an antiracist KCC

KCC has a decades-long history of vicious anti-Muslim and anti-Black racism. Through the 1970s, Zionist fascist and genocidal terrorist Meir Kahane gave multiple public speeches here with his fascist "Jewish Defense League", protected by both the NYPD and FBI (KCC Scepter, 3/18/75).

Since 2018, CHALLENGE covered the years-long struggle exposing a racist Zionist administrator in charge of KCC's social media who was caught publicly posting racist anti-Muslim, anti-Palestinian, and anti-Black messages.

Last year, Public Safety tackled, detained, and arrested a Latin student attempting to de-escalate a situation where a white student was yelling the n-word. The mostly Black and liberal administration spread misinformation about the facts of the case, then pursued disciplinary action against the Black student who was called the n-word! We defeated this through student-faculty fightback.

BROOKLYN, NY, February 26 — "The hardest part of this is the indifference from the College. They said nothing. I've served my food here for years…some of the regulars who work for the college don't even make eye contact and avoid me." These are some of the words from a worker and friend of Kingsborough Community College's antiracist club, Common Ground, whose halal food cart at KCC's front gate was recently defaced by racists.

Amidst ongoing genocide in Gaza, and hours before the U.S. imperialists expanded bombings simultaneously in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, racists spray-painted "Kill Palestinians" and crossed out the word "halal" on the front of the cart. As soon as the worker discovered his cart was defaced, he called the campus Public Safety. When Public Safety told the worker that the cart was technically outside their jurisdiction, and the NYPD didn't have any units to assign yet, the worker contacted a member of Common Ground.

Students and faculty in Common Ground, and members of the international communist revolutionary Progressive Labor Party, spread the word immediately. Within an hour of the call, we were at the campus gates inspecting the halal cart. Even though our campus is still on winter break, part of building a campus student-faculty-worker alliance includes conditioning ourselves and our base to respond rapidly to racist and sexist attacks and demonstrate multiracial working-class unity.

N-Y-P-D, KKK, C-U-N-Y all the same

Upon arrival, we asked a KCC Public Safety sergeant at the front gate if it was possible any of the surveillance cameras pointing outward captured the attack. The sergeant said it was possible, but the request must come from the NYPD, who had already been called. We waited with our friend for six hours outside in the cold, and eventually, he revealed that this hadn't been the first attack; they suddenly began after October 7. In one attack, his entire generator was stolen. With KCC on a dead-end street with little traffic, there is no question these sudden racist attacks aren't a coincidence!

The NYPD did not respond that day, but instead called the worker and instructed him to file a report at the precinct the next day.

The next day at the precinct, the police told the worker filing a report was impossible, and that he should have called 911 and waited by the cart. Several hours later, upon arrival at the cart, the police stated they couldn't read the writing at all. When the worker asked whom then the written word "kill" may refer to, they told him "Don't worry about it" and assured him it wasn't "necessarily a hate crime." When the worker asked why "halal" was painted over and no other words, they shrugged and said it would be downgraded as vandalism with no surveillance requested and left.

After multiple people called and reported to the precinct, the NYPD finally sent a detective who concluded it was a hate crime. After launching a joint investigation with the New York State police and stating they obtained surveillance video from multiple cameras, two weeks later, they have no new updates. Our demands are for a timely and thorough investigation, for KCC's administration to publicly acknowledge the racist attack just outside campus the same way they typically report crimes near campus, and raise money to repair the cart.

Building PLP for antiracism and revolution

Under capitalism, workers don't have state power and we're forced to use -with struggle- the bosses' institutions for things we sometimes need, like police reports. PLP members in Common Ground are sharpening this contradiction by struggling to make working-class student leadership primary over-relying on the police and growing our CHALLENGE network.

We are also welcoming another new member joining PLP this past week; this is how we build the antiracist movement that will lead us to ultimate victory: a workers' dictatorship, where there would be no police or bosses, and the armed working class would immediately investigate anti-worker attacks!

Gearing up for fightback and May Day!

These latest racist attacks are the ongoing consequence of the CUNY administration's racism against students and adjunct faculty, and U.S. imperialism. But as racism is essential to the functioning of capitalism, antiracism is the key to destroying it.

Common Ground is recruiting multiracial and strong women leaders who are providing leadership for this semester. While genocide, imperialist war, and racist attacks surround us, fighting to smash this racist, sexist, imperialist system with communism is the order of the day. JOIN US!

Fight racist liberals' sick hospital shutdown



Ten years after the mortally racist plan to close Downstate Hospital workers return to flatline another attempt by the bosses to shut down one of the few hospitals serving workers in Brooklyn.

Brooklyn, NY, February 12 —Brooklyn workers are facing a new racist attack. The State of New York, along with hospital administration, has unveiled a plan to close Downstate Medical Center (DMC). Ten years ago, they had a similar plan. Downstate workers, patients, and the community mounted a fight that helped save it. Progressive Labor Party (PLP) participated in and led parts of that struggle. In the end, Downstate stayed open. But around the same time, two other Brooklyn hospitals that DMC took over, Victory Memorial and (despite prolonged workers' fightback), Long Island College Hospital, were closed. During the pandemic, Downstate was designated a COVID hospital. Workers fought tirelessly to care for the sick. Some workers died.

Closing Downstate, which is in the center of Brooklyn, is racist. Life expectancy is years lower in Black and Latin neighborhoods in eastern and central Brooklyn. Part of the reason for that is that these neighborhoods have fewer providers, fewer staffed hospital beds, fewer practitioners who accept Medicaid, and lower hospital quality. Since the pandemic, life expectancy has decreased significantly and disparities have widened. Since then, in a plan similar to the one being proposed for Downstate, Kingsbrook, another central/east Brooklyn hospital, has been closed.

One key measure of racism in healthcare is maternal/infant mortality. Maternal mortality of Black workers is three times that of white workers. Black workers experience infant mortality rates more than double that of white workers. These disparities have worsened since COVID. It is estimated that 84 percent of pregnancy-related deaths are preventable with proper pre- and perinatal care. There are only two regional perinatal care centers in Brooklyn whose labor and delivery beds average 93 percent full. One of them is Downstate, Manhattan has more than double the

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Io capitano exposes racist brutality of migration, misses boat connecting it to capitalism



Movie poster for Io Capitano (2023) captures one of the scenes in which Seydou fantasizes to cope with the harsh realities of migration to Europe. The only escape out of the nightmare of capitalism is communism where workers will be the captains of our future.

The statistics about the deadly nature of the migrant journey from Africa to Europe are grim. 3,000 people died trying to cross the Mediterranean in 2023 alone (Guardian 15 February 2024). Countless others have died on the trek across the Sahara to the Libyan coast. The governments of different European countries are united in their efforts to close the gates. Italy's "post"-fascist prime minister Giorgia Meloni is attempting to induce the government of Albania to set up "transit camps" for would-be migrants to Italy. Tunisia is being paid to steer dark-skinned migrants back to sub-Saharan Africa. The migrants who arrive safely in Italy may face long-term confinement and are frequently forced to take jobs paying as little as ten euros a day, if they find work at all. The lives of people fleeing from the effects of imperialism and climate change—hunger, war, poverty, super-exploitation—are, from the standpoint of the world's ruling classes, worth next to nothing.

The capitalist nightmare of migration makes it on to the silver screen

It is the great virtue of Matteo Garrone's "Io Capitano "—celebrated at the Venice Film Festival and nominated for the International Feature Film category of this year's Oscar awards—that these statistics take on faces and names. From a left political standpoint, the film invites critique. But this account of two Senegalese teenagers making their way across Niger and the Saharan desert in search of better lives is very harsh—and very moving. The two principal characters, Seydou and Moussa, are played by young men (Seydou Sarr and Moustapha Fall) with no previous acting experience; they speak in Wolof, a Senegalese language, which requires the audience to understand them through subtitles. They are warned that their planned journey is laden with corpses. But they nonetheless seek the blessing of their ancestors and embark on an "adventure" (as they view it) that soon turns into a nightmare. They are robbed by bandits and witness the deaths of fellow-travelers abandoned in the desert.

In Libya they are imprisoned in foul conditions and witness torture by fire and amputation; Seydou is enslaved as a construction laborer. When they finally make their way to the shore, they are allowed passage on a drastically overcrowded, rusty boat on the condition that Seydou—who has never seen the sea before--function as captain. (Since he is not an adult, he cannot be arrested, and the boat's owners cannot be charged with criminal trafficking.) The film's last shots show the Italian coast looming into view. Seydou—who has been proudly proclaiming, "Io capitano!" ("I am the captain!")—has a worried look on his handsome young face.

"Io Capitano" is hardly conceived from a politically radical standpoint. It is based upon Garrone's extensive consultation with an Ivorian migrant, Mamadou Kouassi, whose three-year-long journey to Italy was still more violent and tragic.

Many rapes occurred in the Libyan prison; kidnapped people unable to pay ransom were driven back to the desert to die; others died in the Mediterranean; upon arriving in Italy Kouassi spent years laboring for near-slave wages in the fields of Catania. Garrone deliberately "removed [such events] because we want the film to reach a wide audience," explained Kouassi ("Migrant's 3 brutal years trying to reach Italy inspired the Oscar-nominated film 'Io Capitano,'" AP 16 February 2024).

Arguably, however, the cost of shielding the audience from the full brutality of Kouassi's experience is to deprive them of knowledge they need to have. The film's extraordinary panoramic camera shots of both the desert and the sea are set against the suffering of the people who traverse them: for the viewer, does this beauty supply relief from pain? There are a few mystical moments (as when a woman who has died of thirst in Seydou's arms is magically elevated and flies back home) that soften the hard-hitting realism.

By focusing on the protagonist's journey from naivete to knowledge, the film adheres to the familiar "coming-of-age" plot, suggesting that the phrase "Io capitano" affirms Seydou's hard-won attainment of manhood. Finally, the film's lack of explicit confrontation with the root causes of migration in imperialist domination of West Africa—welcomed by many critics as signals of its humanist universalism—enables the viewer to empathize emotionally with the characters on a personal level without fully coming to terms with the reasons for their imperiled situation.

Bosses' film hides the true cause of mass displacement

But the film also invites an ironic interpretation that weakens some of these criticisms. The startling beauty of the landscape reminds us that the ugliness of the world is social, not natural. The rare moments of surreal mysticism testify to Seydou's intense need for quasi-religious consolation for his suffering. Above all, the film's title—"I am the captain!"--suggests that we humans are anything but the captains of our own fates: Seydou's troubled look as he approaches the forbidding Italian coastline hardly indicates that a bright future awaits him.

"Io Capitano '' illustrates the capacity of most commercial films to pitch to different levels of political understanding, from humanistic liberalism to radical antiracism. This ideological flexibility is inherent in the nature of popular cinema production under capitalism (Graeme Turner, Film as Social Practice, 131-33).

Nonetheless, Garrone's powerful film testifies to the urgency of the current historical moment, when the crisis of mass migration—like the current war on Gaza—is stripping away any veils legitimizing imperialist racism. Communists are urged to see this film with their friends and discuss how it illustrates the need for a very different world—one in which true universalism is made possible by the abolition of capitalism and the creation of egalitarian communism.

Transit bosses can't put brakes on transit workers' fightback!

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And now, with the expiration of the contract with WMATA set for June 30, the bosses better beware!

WMATA faces a $750 million operating deficit and is poised to take this out of the hides of its workers by attacking pensions, health care, other benefits, and wages while also reducing transit service to the rest of the working class. Workers are becoming strike-ready across the region. Workers are testifying at WMATA budget hearings opposing the bosses' plans and demanding that the big developers and sports arenas who benefit from the mass transit system should pay for it, not workers.

We cannot be fooled by liberal Democratic Party politicians this time around. They promise their support to union leaders and then sell us out. We must rely on ourselves and other workers to fight back and at the same time build revolutionary leadership in our union and around the world to topple this exploitative capitalist system.

Fight racist liberals' sick hospital shutdown

staffed labor and delivery beds as Brooklyn.

So here we are ten years later fighting again for Downstate to survive. The ruling imperialists, in mortal competition with the Chinese bosses and others, need to save money on healthcare and other human services to funnel into their various wars for world domination. As long as they run things, we will never have decent equitable health care. We will always be fighting for scraps.

So, if we can't win, why should we fight back? For one thing, sometimes we can force them to back down temporarily. Our fight 10 years ago saved thousands of lives during the Covid pandemic, not to mention thousands of jobs. More importantly, our class can learn in the battle to see through the tricks used to divide us: racism, sexism, and nationalism. Our class can emerge stronger, especially if some join PLP and dedicate themselves to getting rid of the rule of the few over the many once and for all and help build an egalitarian communist society, where healthcare would be allocated as needed, not for profit and large segregated areas would disappear as we moved to make all workplaces and neighborhoods free of racist and sexist super-exploitation.

LETTERS

We encourage all CHALLENGE readers to send in letters and articles about their experiences fighting the bosses worldwide.

Young masses reject liberal fascist ideas

The Cease-fire Teach-In hosted by the Newark Water Coalition last Friday reveals at once the intelligence of a fighting working class and the constant pitfalls that nationalism and liberalism present for mass consciousness in our class. Organizations representing the Democratic Socialists and also local college-based Palestinian organizers gave presentations that demonstrated how tactics for combatting imperialist genocide can be derived from workers who are not in our base directly.

The working class's knowledge from experience fighting local Zionist reactionaries in the streets of New Jersey reveals that we in the Progressive Labor Party must continue to learn from the militancy of our class brothers and sisters and spread this collective wisdom with those in our base. At the same time, our political participation in the teach-in and the strategic points that we made about widening imperialist world war–regardless of a cease-fire–and our larger critique of capitalism, strengthened our understanding of the need for a mass communist party as the basic historical necessity for our class to move forward. And the Newark Water Coalition will never host a meeting where we can make this plain.

Several very smart young people who attended this teach-in validated our idea that a mass party for communism is necessary and possible. One young woman who has attended study groups in the past indicated that reform is limited based on her experience and that the need for a wider revolutionary commitment is necessary for true change. Others responded very favorably to our calls for an anti-capitalist worldview and the need to put forward internationalism rather than nationalism.

Finally, we addressed observations about "white moderate" complacency and support for Zonist genocide made by the Palestinian youth from the college community. We pointed out that this "white moderate" agenda is led and put forward most viciously by the Black and Latin political class, or as we like to call them liberal fascists. And this point, too, was not rejected. So the bottom line is that it was heartening to see folks come out in large numbers to a Newark-based mass event and that our line was embraced. It shows that more and more we need to insist on the idea that workers do embrace our line and that it is up to us to put it forward and give them that chance to do so because these ideas DO NOT come about spontaneously or organically in a world that smothers our brains with nationalism and liberalism of all kinds.

Patience guided by steady honest criticism, self-criticism, and effort, is how we will win folks in the ones and twos to our mass line. There are no shortcuts.

A communist's valentine's day

Some comrades and I recently hosted "A Communist's Valentine's Day," which we hope to make an annual event. The idea was to collectively express love for the international working class. We had more than 20 PLP members and base members attend. For some, it was their first time hearing about the Party.

At the beginning, we ate brunch and did ice breakers. We asked participants to write down questions to spark discussion. Questions included "What does success mean to you? Is success possible?" and "In a perfect world, what would you be doing tomorrow?", which may not seem political at first glance, but quickly resulted in political discussion that prompted many of us to raise the Party's line.

One quote that resonated for me was "Success (in this system) means that you are meeting every one of capitalism's demands, and that's not possible." We discussed how no worker can truly be successful individually and that "success" we may feel under capitalism can be taken by the bosses suddenly and without any remorse. Only by building a communist world can we achieve collective "success."

After the discussion, we offered the paper and people readily took it and expressed interest in our upcoming study group. One friend took a copy and exclaimed in awe, "This is real?!" Yes, the fight for communism under the leadership of the PLP is real, and it's growing!

We closed out the night (the event lasted several hours!) with a candle vigil for workers who are under attack and for comrades and loved ones we've lost in recent years. We lit candles for migrant workers who are being denied adequate housing in NYC, for workers and children being bombed in Gaza, for students facing racist schooling, for loved ones lost to the capitalism-caused crises of COVID, suicide, and drug overdoses, for the late comrades Carolyn and Fernando, and for others. The vigil was a bonding experience that tied us closer together and served as a reminder of all those we will keep fighting for.

Origin fails to trace the origins of racism to capitalism

Watching the new docudrama by Eva DuVernay, Origin, a few things stand out. It is a movie showcasing systems of oppression in three places in the world: the contemporary U.S., Nazi Germany, and contemporary India. However, I don't believe I heard the word capitalism or the phrase "working class" used even once in the movie. The word"racism" is submerged into the emphasis of the movie, the concept of "caste." The film is based on the best-selling book "Caste" by the former New York Times feature writer, Isabel Wilkerson (who also wrote "The Warmth of Other Suns'' about the U.S. Great Migration from the South). The fact is that if you stay for the full credits, the movie's production was supported by several capitalist foundations. The film has been promoted in a big way (with interviews by the director on television) and several newspaper reviews (e.g. the liberal bosses want this film to be seen).

The story correctly considers the fact that the ideology of Jim Crow, miscegenation laws, and racist pseudoscience of a century ago in the U.S. was very useful to Nazi Germany in creating concentration camps against Jews (but also against Roma people and many others). It also portrays the gross indignities that the Dalits (formerly called "untouchables") are continuing to be subjected to in India. The glossing over of the origin (pun intended) of these divisions (that were exacerbated by British colonialism and imperialism) despite the movie's name is frustrating. DuVernay may mean well but completely ignores the class divisions that largely define the various castes of each country. Without considering the class nature of these capitalist systems, the horrible conditions cannot be truly understood. Solutions to the question of 'caste'' were not provided probably because they do not exist under racist capitalist systems. Only an egalitarian communist society can conquer caste as well as class divisions that the bosses rely on.

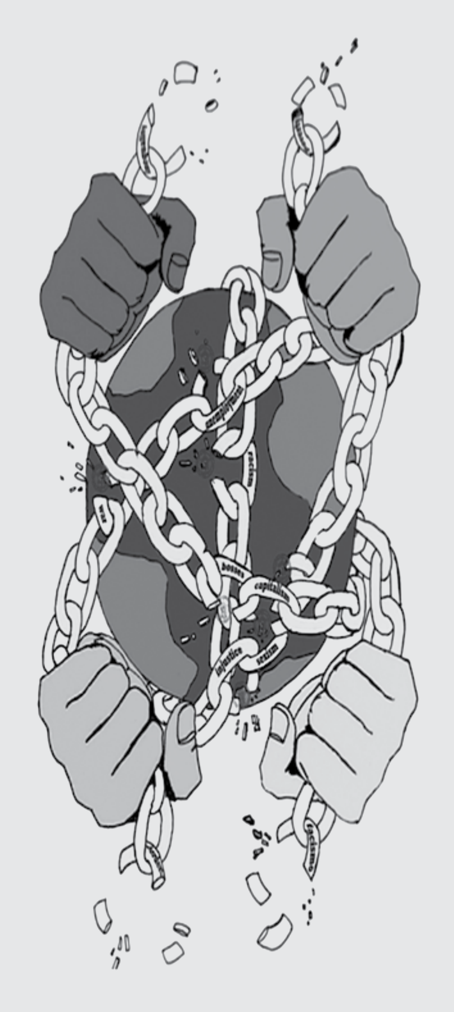
Chant in solidarity with workers in Gaza

How do you spell fascists? IDF
How do you spell murderers? IDF

Hey, hey, ho, ho!
The occupation has got to go!

Joe Biden, you can't hide!
We charge you with genocide

They are killing kids overseas...
Shut it down!
They're killing kids in our streets...
Shut it down!
They're getting killed by bombs...
Shut it down!
They're getting killed by police..
Shut it down!
If they keep bombing...
Shut it down!



This racist system
Shut it down!
This genocidal system
Shut it down!
This capitalist system
Shut it down!
Shut this racist system down!

U.S., Israel hand in hand
racist murder is the bosses' plan,

From Palestine to Mexico
The bosses borders, got to go!

CP, midwife of civil rights movement leaders

Continued from page 8

well.

Between 1940 and 1960 the Great Migration brought over six million African Americans to industrial centers in the urban North and West, where migrants were met with new forms of racial containment. They were often restricted to domestic and retail service work. Those who found industrial employment were kept out of labor unions.

The communist movement had been heavily involved in the fight against racism in the South since around 1930 and had built up a mass movement that included Black and white workers and students. The struggle to defend the Scottsboro Boys, nine young Black men wrongly accused of raping two white women, galvanized the anti-racist movement (see CHALLENGE, 5/31). This communist-led struggle brought thousand of Black and white workers into organizations that fought racism and trained many of the leaders of the civil rights movement.

If you look at all the...auxiliary organizations[of the Communist Party in Alabama], the International Labor Defense, which focused on civil rights issues, they had up to 2,000. The Sharecroppers Union had up to 12,000. You had the International Workers Order. You had the League of Young Southerners. You had the Southern Negro Youth Congress. [In total], it touched the lives easily of 20,000 people.

There were many people who were trained in the Communist Party who went on to become Civil Rights activists [including] Rosa Parks...some of her first political activities were around the Scottsboro case...She never joined the party, but as a young woman, she and her husband, in fact, attended some of the meetings... the infrastructure that was laid forward that becomes the Civil Rights Movement in Alabama, was laid in many ways, not entirely, by the Communist Party (Robin Kelly on WNYC Radio 2/16/2010).

WW II and After: Communist Fighters Under Attack

The movement against racism that grew in the 1930s didn't stop during World War II.

The United States entered the wartime world as the self-professed face of democracy, but African Americans began to make links between Nazi racism, European imperialism, and American [racism].

Veteran activist and president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) A. Philip Randolph



threatened to lead a 100,000-person March on Washington Movement (MOWM) in November 1941 if wartime production was not desegregated...

Between 1942 and 1945 industrial centers, military camps, and port cities, including Detroit, New York, and Los Angeles, exploded with race riots. Ongoing... attempts to constrain black life erupted in violent riots in more than forty cities (Baldwin).

After the war, the U.S. bosses came under increasing pressure as the Soviet Union and the international communist movement exposed the hypocrisy of U.S. capitalism, describing itself as a pillar of "democracy" while denying even the most basic freedom to Black citizens.

Black workers led the charge against racism

Black communists played a leading role in exposing U.S. racism to the world and came under attack as well. Paul Robeson was a communist actor, singer, athlete and political activist. He was a man of international renown and used it to build the movement for workers' power and the fight against racism. Robeson and other communists came under extreme attack by the U.S. bosses who were terrified of the multi-racial fight against racism

In 1947 W. E. B. Du Bois placed the grievances of African Americans before the newly formed United Nations in his famous "Appeal to the World" address... singer and activist Paul Robeson signed a U.S.S.R. petition to the United Nations, "We Charge Genocide," documenting a series of human rights abuses against African Americans. Communist activist Claudia Jones organized in Harlem for jobs, housing, and humane immigration policies. Both Robeson's and Du Bois's passports were revoked until 1958 while the Trinidadian [Claudia] Jones was deported to Britain. In the Cold War context, black struggles for freedom were largely denounced as un-American (Baldwin).

The bosses' anti-communist McCarthyism campaign was an attempt to strangle the communist movement in the U.S. and stop the fight against racism. It terrified many people. Leading fighters were driven underground, out of the country and some were put in jail. For a while, there were few public demonstrations against racism in the South or North as anyone, Black or white, who stood up against Jim Crow, housing or school segregation was labeled a communist and subject to being harassed or attacked by the FBI.

But the working class continued to fight and the struggle against racism eventually focused on the Jim Crow laws that segregated all forms of life in the South. The U.S. bosses were particularly vulnerable to the fight against Jim Crow laws. The German Nazis had used the laws as a model for setting up their fascist system "[Hitler in Main Kampf] describes the United States as 'the one state' that had made headway toward what he regarded as a healthy and utterly necessary racist regime" (NY Times 5/22). Black soldiers returning from the war were increasingly unwilling to tolerate fascism at home after fighting it in Europe.

Many Black workers began to resist legal segregation and Alabama civil rights leaders decided it was time to take mass action against the laws.

In 1955, Rosa Parks was asked to make a stand that would spark the campaign. When she refused to get out of her seat setting off the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the Black working class of Montgomery, experienced by the communist-led fight to defend the Scottsboro Boys and the many other battles against racism, was prepared to fight and that they did

RED EYE ON THE NEWS . . .



Poverty is up, up, up

New York Times, 2/21–Nearly two million New York City residents, including one in four children, lived in poverty in 2022, an increase of 500,000 people that amounted to the biggest single-year jump in a decade...The biggest reason for the surge in poverty, both nationally and in New York, was the end of several pandemic-era government policies, like the expanded child tax credit, enhanced unemployment insurance and cash payments that helped low-income families keep up with rising costs...Black, Latino and Asian New Yorkers were roughly twice as likely as white residents to live in poverty, and women were more likely than men to be unable to afford their basic needs, according to the report...While the city said in October that it had recovered all the jobs lost during the pandemic, the positions that have returned have mostly been in low-paying industries, like home health care... At the same time, the retail sector, a higher-paying industry that disproportionately employs Black, Latino and Asian workers, shed more jobs than any other industry...The need for public aid is clear at Grand Street Settlement...has seen its food pantry lines swell to 2,800 people a month, up from 500 before the pandemic.

Iranian oil pipelines attacked

Al Jazeera, 2/21–Iran has accused Israel of being behind two attacks last week on gas pipelines that disrupted supplies in several provinces, further raising tensions between the regional archenemies amid the war on Gaza..."The explosion of the country's gas lines was the work of Israel," Oil Minister Javad Owji said on Wednesday after a cabinet meeting. Two explosions hit Iran's leading south-north gas pipeline network on February 14. The blasts hit a natural gas pipeline from Iran's western Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province up north to cities on the Caspian Sea. The roughly 1,270km (790-mile) pipeline begins in Asaluyeh, a hub for Iran's offshore South Pars gas field. In December, a hacking group that Iran accuses of having links to Israel claimed it carried out a cyberattack which disrupted as much as 70 percent of Iran's petrol stations.

Israeli soldiers share the loot

Haaretz, 2/19–...soldiers have been looting the property of Gaza Strip residents after taking over their homes...columnist Nahum Barnea quoted the testimony of one reservist doctor: "Smaller, less disciplined forces have looted telephones, Dysons, motorcycles and bicycles... At some point, I stopped commenting on it, because I was viewed as a nudnik."A combat soldier in the Givati Brigade proudly showed Uri Levy, a reporter for Kan 11 public television, a large mirror taken from a home in Khan Yunis. On social media, soldiers post videos like the one of a soldier proudly displaying soccer jerseys taken from a Gaza home, while reservists boast of gourmet meals prepared from food they took from Gazans' kitchens...The looting is dwarfed by the unprecedented death and destruction and the pride soldiers take in them, as documented in videos... Looting reflects a negation of the enemy population's humanity, making it acceptable to rifle through their personal belongings, even the most intimate ones, and choose what to take.

Australia prepares for Pacific war

Financial Times, 2/21–Australia is to more than double the size of its naval fleet with an extra A$11.1bn ($7.2bn) of investment to adapt to China's military build-up in the Pacific region. The navy will expand to 26 warships, including 11 new frigates and six new large vessels with long-range missile capability, as Canberra toughens its military stance in response to rising regional tension. The investment will give Australia its largest navy since the second world war...The naval overhaul comes a year after Australia's Defence Spending Review unveiled the biggest strategic shift in its military posture in almost 80 years, arguing that intense Chinese-US competition had become the defining feature of the Pacific region. It cited China's military build-up as the "largest and most ambitious of any country since the end of the second world war".

BLACK AND RED, UNTOLD HISTORY PART II

IMPETUS FOR THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT



Black workers rallying against racist school segregation in the 1960's, during the height of Jim Crow era. The leadership of the movement was inspired by the communist movement

The following piece was originally published in the June 14, 2017 edition of CHALLENGE (volume 49 no. 12). Ruling-class historians have segregated the fight against racism and the fight for an egalitarian system, communism. In reality, the two were connected like flesh and bone. Many antiracist struggles were led by, initiated by, or were fought with communists and communist-influenced organizations. Many Black fighters were also dedicated communists and pro-communists of their time.

In turn, the bosses have used anti-communism as a tool to terrorize and divide antiracist fightback. Regardless of communist affiliation, anyone who fought racism was at risk of being redbaited. Why? 1) The ruling class understands the natural relationship between antiracism and communism, and 2) Multiracial unity threatens the very racist system the bosses "work so hard" to maintain.

This series aims to reunite the history of communism with antiracism. Part I explored how the fight to free Scottsboro Boys was ignited by the International Labor Defense of the Communist Party. See Robin D.G. Kelley's book Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists during the Great Depression to find out more.

The following piece excerpts from the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in the essay, "The Civil Rights Movement" by researcher Davarian L. Baldwin at Trinity College.

The Civil Rights Movement was a decades-long mass uprising of Black and white workers and students against the most open forms of racism in the U.S. Its impetus was the growing international communist movement fresh off the defeat of fascism in Europe and quickly growing in China, Africa and around the world, combined with the growing resistance to racism by the Black workers in the U.S.

The U.S. ruling class tried to shut down the mass antiracist fightback by using anti-communism to divide and terrorize the movement. In the period right after World War II, the Soviet Union was admired by workers around the world, including in the U.S., for defeating the Nazi war machine. The workers-led society in the Soviet Union stood in stark contrast to the legal segregation workers faced in the U.S.

Communist movement dawned The Civil Rights Movement

While the racist Jim Crow laws in the South were are well known, segregation cut across the country. Black workers who moved to northern cities to look for jobs faced racism in looking for homes and on the job as

Continued on page 7



Our Spring
By Langston Hughes(1933)

Bring us with our hands abound,
Our teeth knocked out,
Our heads broken,
Bring us shouting curses, or crying,
Or silent as tomorrow.
Bring us the electric chair,
Or the shooting wall,
Or the guillotine.
But you can't kill all of us.
You can't silence all of us.
You can't stop all of us—
Kill Vanzetti in Boston and Huang Ping rises
In China.
We're like those rivers
That fill with the melted snow in spring
And flood the land in all directions.
Our Spring has come.[...]

WRITE FOR CHALLENGE!

CHALLENGE strives to be the communist paper for and by the international working class. We call on all readers, supporters, and comrades to submit class struggle articles, analytical pieces, original photos and graphics, letters, and political cartoons.

The next deadline is night of Friday, March 8

Send to desafio.challenge@gmail.com. For some guidance and house style rules, please go to www.bit.ly/338ZJow

All submissions are open to collective discussion, struggle, and change. See sidebar on page 2 about fighting for collectivity and against a cult of the individual.

